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# U.S. Surgeon General Quietly Backpedaled on Water Fluoridation 5 Years Ago, Emails Reveal

*After decades of pushing water fluoridation as one of the greatest public health accomplishments in U.S. history, the U.S. surgeon general's office stopped issuing public statements of support after a National Toxicology Program report linked fluoride to children's lower IQs.*

By Brenda Baletti, Ph.D.

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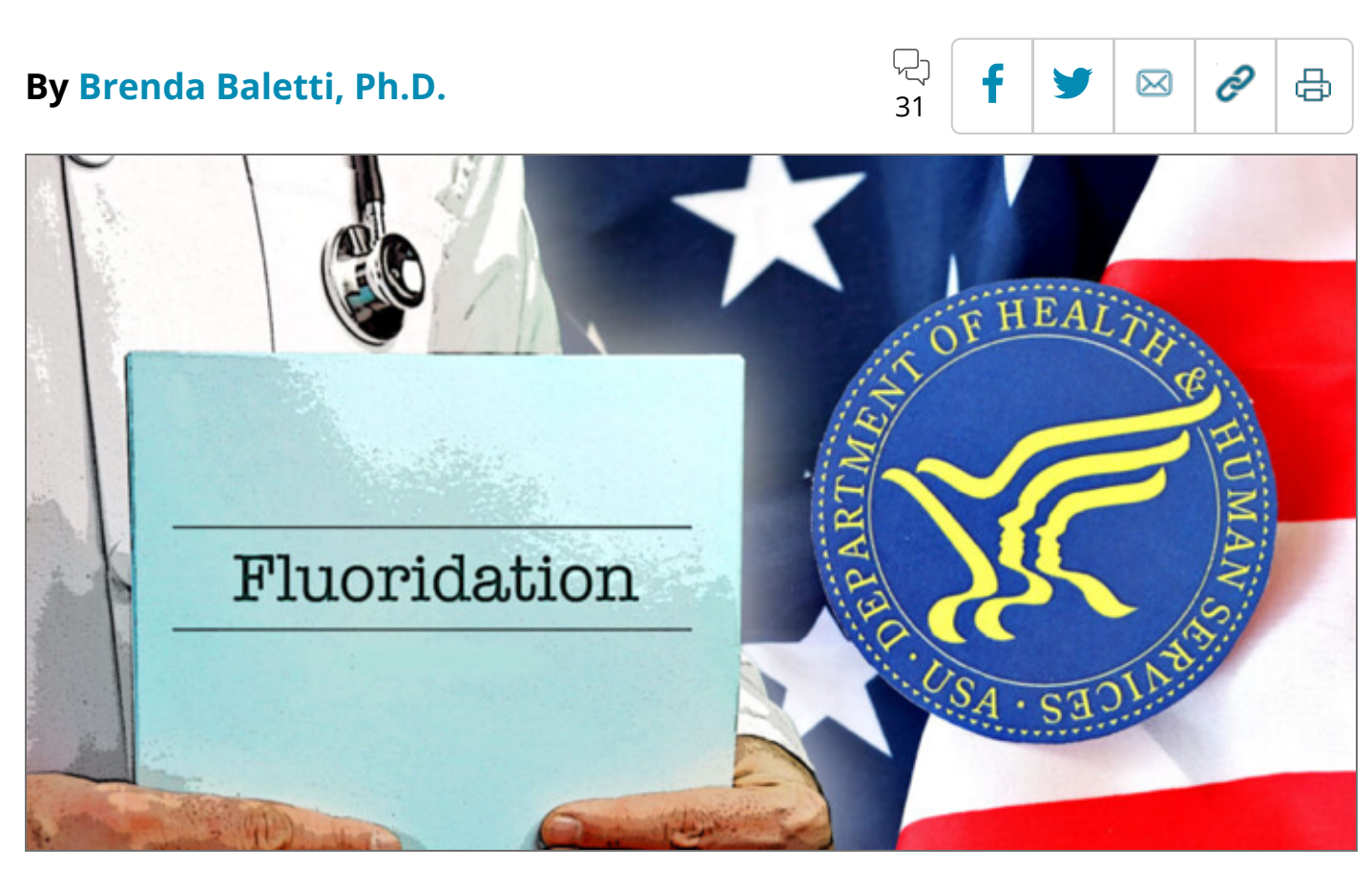

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For more than seven decades, U.S. public health officials steadfastly supported water fluoridation, claiming the practice is a key strategy for maintaining and improving dental health.

Even today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calls water fluoridation one of the "ten great public health achievements of the 20th century."

However, internal email communications shared with The Defender suggest that as early as 2020, officials at the highest levels of the U.S. Public Health Service — the Office of the Surgeon General — were having second thoughts.

"These emails show that despite public statements to the contrary, there is a lot of concern in the federal government about the potential link between fluoridated drinking water and lower IQs," said Michael Connett.

Connett, an attorney, represents plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The suit seeks to end water fluoridation based on science linking low-level fluoride exposure to lower IQ scores in children.

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The emails were obtained via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request and shared with The Defender by plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

They reveal that in 2020, on the 75th anniversary of water fluoridation, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams declined to make a statement endorsing water fluoridation, despite strong encouragement and behind-the-scenes organizing by his Chief Dental Officer Timothy Ricks.

Adams' office also stopped Ricks from co-signing, with eight previous chief dental officers, and releasing a letter supporting community water fluoridation and celebrating the anniversary.

The U.S. surgeon general's public support for water fluoridation has been considered key to boosting water fluoridation since the practice began.

Until 2020, every surgeon general had made oral or written statements supporting water fluoridation, according to the communications among previous chief dental officers — appointees who advise the surgeon general and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the recruitment and development of oral health professionals.

However, on this important anniversary, Adams' staff told Ricks the surgeon general was reluctant to make a pro-fluoridation statement because he knew government scientists at the National Toxicology Program (NTP) were about to publish a systematic review of the literature on fluoride and neurotoxicity in children.

The NTP report found that neonatal and childhood fluoride exposure had negative cognitive and neurodevelopmental effects for children.

"One thing these emails demonstrate is what is undiscussed in the public sphere is that the science on fluoridation is very troubling, not just in high doses but at levels applicable to water fluoridation in the U.S."

"The fact that this concern is being expressed by an office that has historically been very supportive of fluoridation further highlights the serious implications of the NTP's findings," Connett said.

Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who also held the office under the Obama administration, publicly endorsed water fluoridation in 2016. That was after he officially lowered the recommended dosage for water fluoridation the year before from 0.7-1.2 milligrams per liter (mg/L) to 0.7 mg/L after considering "adverse health effects" along with alleged benefits.

The original draft version of Murthy's revised water fluoridation recommendations included a summary of some research on fluoride's impact on IQ and other neurological issues with a statement saying further research was needed on the topic and that reducing the recommended levels for water fluoridation maintains benefits yet "reduces the chance of unwanted effects."

Those statements were not present in Murthy's final draft.

The Defender could not locate any public statement by Murthy in support of water fluoridation during his current term, which began in March 2021. Murthy's office did not respond to an inquiry about his latest position on the issue.

The Defender did not receive responses from the offices of Adams or Ricks.

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### NTP report raised concerns about fluoridation while CDC continues to 'blindly support' it, emails show

As the 75th anniversary of water fluoridation approached, Ricks — appointed chief dental officer by Adams — drafted a statement endorsing the water fluoridation for Surgeon General Adams to sign.

However, Rick discovered Adams "didn't want to sign such a statement because NTP was developing a monograph on fluoride that would undercut our long-standing support," Ricks wrote in an email to a member of the surgeon general's office.

In a series of emails over the next several months to the surgeon general's staff, Ricks rallied the support of previous surgeon generals and chief dental officers for a statement, and attempted to convince the office that the NTP report was flawed or that the findings on fluoride's neurotoxicity ought not to raise concerns.

The NTP is an interagency program housed at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that investigates environmental toxins to determine if they threaten human health. Scientists there have been studying the neurological effects of fluoride on human health since 2016.

The NTP's study was launched 10 years after the National Research Council concluded its own multi-year study, which determined fluoride is an endocrine disruptor that can interfere with brain function and mandated further research into the issue.

After years of research, NTP's report went through multiple rounds of peer review — more than any other publications put out by the NTP, because of the controversial or "sensitive" nature of their findings on fluoride's neurotoxicity.

Documents obtained through public records requests also later revealed lobbying by the dental industry and coordination with government officials from other agencies within the NIH, including the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), to weaken the conclusions, delay the report or stop its publication went on behind the scenes for several years.

Ricks coordinated with the American Dental Association (ADA) on how to continue to advocate for community water fluoridation in response to the report's anticipated findings.

In April 2022, when the NTP finally announced it was ready to publish its final report, the ADA and other organizations obtained copies of the report and lobbied federal officials to block its publication.

Dental officials at the CDC, the NIH and the NIDCR pressured HHS Assistant Secretary for Health Rachel Levine to prevent the review from being published.

Levine told the NTP to put the report on hold and send it for another round of peer review.

In March 2023, the draft NTP report linking prenatal and childhood fluoride exposure to reduced IQ in children was finally published under court order. In the process, many officials publicly and privately objected to the review process, which they claimed was politicized by agencies and individuals with a vested interest in water fluoridation.

The report is a key document in the ongoing lawsuit filed by Food & Water Watch, the Fluoride Action Network, Moms Against Fluoridation and private individuals against the EPA seeking to end water fluoridation.

Arguments in that lawsuit began in June 2020, but it was put on hold pending the publication of the NTP report. The landmark fluoride trial resumed in January of this year and the judge is currently deliberating on his final decision.

While the lawsuit and the political wrangling over the report were ongoing in 2020, Ricks reached out to his colleagues for help getting the surgeon general to maintain the office's support for water fluoridation.

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In an email labeled, "Not for dissemination; keep confidential," Ricks shared a "bombshell" with former chief dental officers. He told them the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), the NTP and the NIDCR had informed the Office of the Surgeon General that the NIEHS/NTP report would "state that fluoride was definitely neurotoxic to children" and the surgeon general would be withdrawing the letter that Ricks had prepared.

Ricks and others planned for the dental officers, without Ricks' signature, to issue their own letter and share it at the meeting of the ADA. Ricks would privately facilitate wide circulation of the letter, he said.

The impacts of the surgeon general's decision raised concerns for Ricks. In another email, he worried the public would begin to think that the U.S. Public Health Service no longer backs water fluoridation.

When Ricks received a draft of the NTP report in August 2020, he again reached out to the surgeon general's office to seek a signature, downplaying the report's conclusions.

Ricks quoted the NTP report's new summary statement, which said that at water fluoridation levels typically found in the U.S. "effects on cognitive neurodevelopment are inconsistent, and therefore unclear."

He highlighted the sentence and contended that uncertainty over whether fluoride damaged cognitive development made it "safe for the Surgeon General to issue a statement of support."

According to the excerpt highlighted by Ricks, "However, when considering all the evidence ... NTP concludes that fluoride is presumed to be a cognitive neurodevelopmental hazard to humans."

Others at NIH voiced concerns that there would be public pushback, "since there is now preliminary early evidence about potential risks to fluoride."

Ricks also wrote that the surgeon general indicated he would sign such a document only if he had full backing from both NIH and CDC. He wondered whether then-acting director Lawrence A. Tabak, Ph.D., also a dentist, and Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., would support such a letter.

By the end of August, Ricks had given up on the letter. In an email to Deputy Surgeon General Erica Schwartz, he said what he called the "anti-fluoride movement" was "more organized than ever before."

He added that the NIH was now "on the fence about fluoride" despite the fact that the CDC was "seemingly blindly supporting fluoridation."

In his last email to Schwartz, Ricks expressed his concern that a "very well put together" video would be aired at the next meeting of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology.

He also noted that the president of the largest dental public health organization in the U.S. "has contributed to anti-fluoride research."

Ricks was referring to research published by E. Angeles Martinez Mier, Ph.D., professor and associate dean for Global Engagement at the Indiana University School of Dentistry and former president of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry.

Martinez Mier co-authored an NIH, NIEHS and EPA-funded study published in Environmental Health Perspectives on a group called the ELEMENT cohort in Mexico that found that higher prenatal fluoride exposure was associated with lower cognitive function in children tested at age 4 and ages 6-12.

That 2017 article is just one of several recent studies that have identified the neurotoxic effects of fluoride exposure on children.

The study Martinez Mier worked on was part of one of four major recent studies on fluoride neurotoxicity done examining birth cohorts, which are considered the "gold standard" of epidemiological studies. In cohort studies, researchers collect epidemiological data during pregnancy and then from children over their lifetimes to study a variety of health outcomes tied to environmental exposures.

A significant body of scientific research has cast doubt on the dental health benefits of ingesting fluoride — and demonstrated negative health consequences of fluoride exposure, ranging from dental and skeletal fluorosis to developmental neurotoxicity.

However, the media, public health officials and even other researchers have until recently systematically discredited anyone, including scientists, who raised concerns about fluoride, going so far as to label them "conspiracy theorists."

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**Brenda Baletti, Ph.D.**

Brenda Baletti, Ph.D., is a senior reporter for The Defender. She wrote and taught about capitalism and politics for 10 years in the writing program at Duke University. She holds a Ph.D. in human geography from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's from the University of Texas at Austin.

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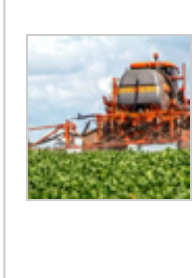
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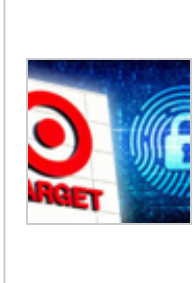
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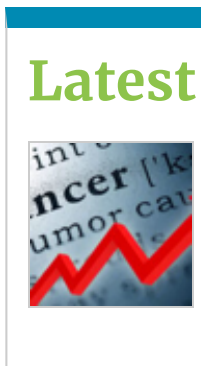
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**David Richard**
16 days ago
Well reported and of urgent concern to all citizens. Fluoridation represents one of the first examples of medical treatment without informed consent and needs to be abolished on that basis as well as on the weight of research evidence against it.
22 0 Reply

**Sebastian**
16 days ago
bottom line: They wish to kill us.
20 0 Reply

**drw22** → Sebastian
16 days ago
They wish to dumb us down so we're easier to control.
9 0 Reply

**Turtlewax** → Sebastian
16 days ago
They wish maximum extraction of monetary value from us.
8 0 Reply

**cjae**
16 days ago
It's a by-product of fertilizer....Does absolutely nothing for dental health. It's a poison which, after Covid should make perfect sense why it is in our water systems.
16 0 Reply

**holisticpoet**
16 days ago edited
Taking a look at the breakthroughs that have been considered to be best for human health, irony is the only thing that comes to my mind. Fluoride in the water supply, vaccinations, pharmaceutical drugs, food preservatives, Sodium lauryal sulfate, mercury amalgam fillings, these are just a few of what comes to mind. All of these have reeked havoc on the health of mankind.

Haven't we figured out yet that most of what we make for our own health actually hurts us? Will we ever learn to trust what God has provided for us? Can anyone think of anything that we have made for ourselves that is beneficial for us that the natural world cannot provide? Off the top of my head I cannot think of anything.
15 0 Reply

**Steven Berge** → holisticpoet
16 days ago
We have to face the fact, and alert others to it, that those in control want a dumbed down and sick general public to be just smart enough to run their profit machines and generate profits for the medical miscare industry they established.
5 0 Reply

**Mike G** → holisticpoet
15 days ago
Penicillin? Most people 200 years ago died from infections that we would consider easily treatable now. That said, the overuse of antibiotics is killing us, as is the use of fluoride and most of the things you list. Of course, oregano oil is a potent antibiotic and antiviral, so there's that. I just think not EVERY breakthrough for human health has been a disaster. Like indoor plumbing for instance.
1 0 Reply

**Beatrice** → Mike G
15 days ago
As you mentioned, there are natural antibiotics that can be used. In fact, penicillin is a naturally occurring mold. Most pharmaceuticals are derived from plants. Keep in mind that pharmaceutical companies are mostly capitalizing on convenience. I would highly recommend that everyone take a course on natural medicine should we, for whatever reason, not have access to manufactured medicines.
2 0 Reply

**Rogier F. van Vlissingen**
16 days ago
Right after WW2 Holland followed American guidance on fluoridation, in the 50's but within 10 years they knew the science was bogus and there were all kinds of naaty consequences. They abolished it again. It is astounding to watch how long it took to get such simple and obvious blunder reversed.
13 0 Reply

**Rob DF** → Rogier F. van Vlissingen
16 days ago
Are you sure it was a blunder?
2 0 Reply

**Jimychanga**
16 days ago
Yep. Don't drink it. All you have to do is study the original findings from Kingston, NY where the 1930s experiment was done, to know it was a BS scam to sell soot from power plant smokestacks as a multi million dollar fluoride "health solution" paid for by the victims/ taxpayers themselves for the last 80 years! Nice work if you can get it. Even the WWII concentration camps used it as a mental retardant and sedative to keep the population complacent. This was well know. No excuses Surgeon General!
13 0 Reply

**BarbaraCharis**
16 days ago
Information was out there over 40 years ago...I was handing out articles to everyone I knew about the dangers of fluoride...in toothpaste, mouthwash, dental treatments and municipal water. It has taken all these years for the information to go mainstream, because money is of more value than human health ...and life. Where can we find honest government officials? American health has decreased greatly, because money is more important than the truth.
7 0 Reply

**Barbara Mayers** → BarbaraCharis
16 days ago
In 1956, at San Diego State University, I presented a well documented speech/paper on the dangers of fluoridation. My Professor was horrified by the content and wanted to know just where I found my documentation. Amazingly, I told her it was in our SDSU Library down in the basement stacks, well hidden! She was totally taken by the documentation and I received an A+!! My father was a Naturopathic Chiropractor who was well studied in biology and the effects of chemicals on the human body which led me to do this research!!! I hope those listening in the class were well informed by the documentation presented!!
8 0 Reply

**Seabreezes1**
16 days ago
I knew something was up the past few years when the annual celebration of fluoridation in Jan-Feb by dental players was downright subdued.

Hooray! There are a few people in positions of authority who have a modicum of integrity, or at least enough of a sense of self-preservation not to sacrifice their credibility because they are "scared of their dentist."
5 0 Reply

**scott**
16 days ago
Disgusting
5 0 Reply

**Karm**
16 days ago
More government lies. Our children have been so hurt by their own government. Will anyone ever be able to trust Washington DC politicians again?
4 0 Reply

**Bev Jo**
16 days ago
This is so important. It's horrific we are forced to drink poison against our wills or pay a lot of money to avoid it. Another part to this is that sometime the full terrible effect of poisons in our food and water don't show up in the first or even next generation exposed. My poverty class parents had incredibly good health and everything was organic then, but then my parents (living in cities) less so, and down the line.

Another issue is the epidemic of "autism," which many of us never heard about growing up. Now it seems everyone has a younger relative or child who is autistic, and often more in each family....
4 0 Reply

**ZoeyMO** → Bev Jo
15 days ago
Everything may not have been organic even then. Toxic pesticides were widely used on certain crops as far back as the late 1800s. https://ecology.wa.gov/blog...
1 0 Reply

**Wendy**
16 days ago
Murthy is an idiot and a dangerous one. Moreever, he is NOT MY DOCTOR and never will be! He is promoting fluoridation still, despite science proving it causes lowered IQ, cancer, tooth enamel deformities, etc. And fluoride only works in children when applied to their teeth. It does not work in adults. And no one should be drinking this poison! I personally stopped using fluoridated toothpaste decades ago and it was not until then that I stopped getting cavities (tooth decay).
2 0 Reply

**Beatrice** → Wendy
15 days ago
Such a farce isn't it! I use hydroxyapatite and xylitol gum. Too much fluoride in a pregnant mother will lead to fluorosis ( spots on enamel) on the newborn's permanent teeth which is why so many children born to mother's on prozac developed this.
0 0 Reply

**drw22**
16 days ago
Over 30 years ago, the city I lived in had a ballot question on fluoride. It was quite contentious and a lot of money was dropped on it from the pro fluoride side. It lost, but was closer than it should have been. My children and I have been fortunate to live fluoride free all these years.
2 0 Reply

**BJNeal**
16 days ago
There is never a good use for a neurotoxin - fluoride or other! My brother/dentist and sister/dental hygienist were so brainwashed by the dental schools that they still can't see that while applying fluoride to the teeth MAY have some benefit, it doesn't make sense. I don't think there's a place for it at all in our bodies. Ritalin is also a neurotoxin!
1 0 Reply

**Beatrice** → BJNeal
15 days ago
I asked my dentist what his thoughts were regarding fluoride and he said that it's safe as long as you don't swallow it. So, I asked him if diesel fuel was safe in my mouth as long as I don't swallow. You should have seen his face. After that discussion, I noticed that he no longer recommended fluoride treatments in his office. Isn't it amazing how dentists who are doctors, fail to realize that the lining in our mouth is a mucous membrane that absorbs toxins that can be delivered directly into our blood stream.
4 0 Reply

**Ricky Ricardo**
15 days ago
Telling people that fluoride is good for their health, is one of the biggest frauds of all-time. Of course, the biggest is the Covid Con! The number one fraud (False Flag) was 9/11, which allowed the Deep State to begin endless wars in the Middle East, kill civilians and steal their resources! Don't worry...the worst is yet to come.
1 0 Reply

**Beatrice** → Ricky Ricardo
15 days ago
But fluoride helps keeps the masses pacified. Prozac is fluoride based as well as the fluoroquinolone antibiotics like Cipro that are dangerous and can cause permanent neurological damage.
2 0 Reply

**Ricky Ricardo** → Beatrice
15 days ago
Fluoroquinolones are deadly!
2 0 Reply

**Beatrice** → Ricky Ricardo
15 days ago
And they still use them as a first line treatment despite knowing the dangers.
2 0 Reply

**mikies123**
16 days ago
I am curious as to the path these communications have come to light? That's a story I would like to know more.
1 0 Reply

**ZoeyMO** → mikies123
15 days ago
If it involves an individual's emails, you can bet it was either a FOIA request or discovery in a lawsuit (in which case we would likely not see it until the lawsuit was over).
1 0 Reply

**Stephen Simac**
9 days ago
The chief dental officer in our national "public health" agency, wrote that fluoride is "definitely neurotoxic to children", while the NTP report itself (suppressed for almost a decade due to internal and dental association pressures, until released by court order) "concludes that fluoride is presumed to be a cognitive neurodevelopmental hazard to humans." Nevertheless he pushed for the Surgeon General to sign a letter celebrating 75 years of poisoning most children and adults in America, with dosing public water supplies with toxic waste that can't legally be dumped in public waterways. That says it all.
0 0 Reply

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